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Decline of Press Freedom Reported in Latin America

The Inter American Press Association declared yesterday that "press freedom in Latin America is at its lowest ebb since 1950."

Meeting in general assembly, the IAPA accepted the report of its Committee on Freedom of the Press which listed five nations as permitting no press freedom: Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Panama and Paraguay.

After intense debate, the assembly put Argentina in a related category, saying that its press freedom "has been violated" while not destroyed.

Thirty other nations or dependencies were said to enjoy press freedom, but in eight of those cases threats to that freedom were reported.

In Latin America, the report said, more than one of every two citizens is "denied the freedom of information, news and comment, so essential to democracy." Argentina and

Brazil together include almost half of the 245 million popula-

The six nations singled out for lack of press freedom are all generally considered to be dictatorships and most are under military rule. The report went on:

"But that a government of the acknowledged democratic traditions of Uruguay or Chile should violate freedom of the press, even momentarily, can only cause consternation among the Americas."

In its country-by-country listing, the report noted that several editions of Chilean papers were confiscated from Oct. 17 to 23, the period climaxed by an abortive military mutiny there.

Uruguay was cited for restricting "certain types of news and the free circulation of foreign newspapers." Publications there have been forbidden to report the exploits of the Tupamaros, a leftist

revolutionary terrorist group. Foreign publications mentioning the group have been confiscated.

Other countries said to have press freedom, but threat to it, included:

- The Dominican Republic, where President Joaquin Balaguer personally assumed the responsibility for preventing the legal entry of presses for a proposed opposition paper "because he considered that they could be used to publish Communist propaganda."

- Honduras, where papers from neighboring El Salvador are banned. The two countries fought recently in a conflict halted by intervention of the Organization of American States.

- The United States, where IAPA publishers "voiced alarm over what they consider increasing governmental challenges to their business practices."